

Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, 2018

Pat Schock, Green Bay, WI. Member of the Wisconsin Public Education Network.
I am a Spanish-English aide and have experience as a librarian and special education aide.

1

We give thanks to Rep Nygren and others for increasing revenue limits. For excellent schools, community support is necessary but not sufficient.

2

I support the recommendations of the Legislature's Urban Education Task Force minority members' report after their visit here in 2016. I support increases for special education, ESL services, and the community school model. I refer you back to Dr. Driver's testimony in Milwaukee. The amount of cash per year for the schools is limited, and vouchers diminish that. Special education and ESL work can't be done on the cheap.

One of my students had been brought to this country by his father. The parents were divorced and I believe the father had died. This teenager was alone in the United States and fluent only in Spanish. He was fending for himself for rent, food and whatever he could learn in school. When I sat next to him, he would follow the math teacher and work on equations, but otherwise he had the eternal temptation of a teenager to join with his pals in joking and throwing paper airplanes. He was fluent only in Spanish, and he couldn't keep focus without assistance.

3

Now I ask you to take a new step. I turn to Dr. Underwood with the background in school law. I ask this group to be thrifty, and not to waste any cash. The Wisconsin Constitution declares that the state shall fund schools as equally as practicable. I believe current budget practice conflicts with this directive.

Parents of children in private schools get a tax exclusion up to 10 thousand dollars. However, the children who benefit from this exclusion are not the ones in greatest need. It is well known that student achievement is associated with economic status. Dr. Langenfeld has been pointing this out for several years.

Who is getting the benefit of this tax deduction?

The LaCrosse Tribune has an article from 2017 quoting data from the Department of Revenue. The tax cut was costing the state about \$12 million per year, and two-thirds of the benefits went to taxpayers earning more than \$100,000 per year.

My question to you is: who needs that 12 million dollars more: the high-income taxpayers, or the children with language and behavior needs? I have seen the teachers put in heroic effort. Their work deserves strong support and not the bare minimum.

Thank you.

Page 2, Notes and Sources

1

Benefits of raising the revenue cap

Great public schools improve the resale value of homes and improve the property value of an entire community in a way unavailable to private schools. Communities recognized for school excellence have an advantage to businesses comparing relocation sites.

3

Constitutional directive

The legislature shall provide by law for the establishment of district schools, which shall be as nearly uniform as practicable....
(source: Wisconsin Blue Book 2017-18, p. 486.)

Socioeconomic status and academic performance

Reasons why low income is associated with low academic performance:

These are both economic and learning-based. Economic factors include: parents absent from the house during homework time, and the need of parents to call on teenagers for work or babysitting within the family. A child who moves frequently with his/her parents will miss out on the neighborhood friendships which let him/her feel stable, confident, and ready to confront new concepts in school.

Coursework problems for students living in poverty include their lack of prerequisites and missing prerequisites due to transient residence. Children who live in poverty may not have role models who are familiar with academic subjects and hold the high expectations for homework that are characteristic of top income earners.

"As is well known, students' nonschool factors are key predictors of children's educational achievement. Equality of Educational Opportunity and Children and Their Primary Schools (Coleman et al., 1966; Plowden 1967) ... showed that much, but not all, of the variation in achievement scores between students could be accounted for by nonschool factors. Since this time, a substantial amount of research has reinforced this finding...." (source: G. Hampden-Thompson and J. Johnston, "Variation in The Relationship Between Nonschool Factors and Student Achievement on International Assessments." National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES 2006-014/ American Institutes for Research 4-1-2006.)